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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CONNAUGHTON DISCUSSES CLIMATE CHANGE WITH INDIA'S MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS

¶1. Summary. During his visit to exchange views with the Government of India (GOI) on the upcoming Major Economies Meeting in S. Korea and the G8 Meeting in Japan, James L. Connaughton, Chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), met on June 16, 2008 with Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) Minister of State, Namo Narain Meena, Additional Secretary for Climate Change J.M. Mauskar and Joint Secretary for Climate Change R.R. Rashmi. CEQ Associate Director for International Affairs Landon Van Dyke, Science Counselor Satish Kulkarni and Science FSN also attended. Topics discussed were India's National Action Plan for Climate Change, technology transfer, reduction in tariffs, and forestation. End Summary.

India's National Action Plan for Climate Change

¶2. Chairman Connaughton initiated the meeting by asking the Minister about India's National Action Plan for Climate Change. Minister Meena refrained from giving any details of the National Action Plan but mentioned that the document is expected June end or early July and hopefully before the upcoming G8 meeting. He explained that the role of his Ministry will be that of a coordinating agency, while implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies will be done by individual Ministries and State governments. Responding to the Chairman's query if new legislation will be required to enforce the National Action Plan, Meena replied that implementation will be the most important aspect of the Action Plan and if there is any need for legislation, it will be formulated, although he did not foresee such a step.

India Eager to Receive Clean Technologies

¶3. Minister Meena also suggested that technology transfer will be the key to the success of any emissions reduction plans. Additional Secretary Mauskar further outlined the need for faster transfer of technology, research and development collaboration and enhanced funding. The minister repeatedly insisted that all programs have to be under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and there should be no conditionality attached to providing funds. Additional Secretary Mauskar welcomed technological cooperation and indicated that he would provide EmbOffs a list of areas of interest for tech-transfer. They also requested a list of technologies that are available in the public domain that can be shared by the US with India.

Ministry Silent on Tariff Reductions

¶4. Chairman Connaughton suggested reduction in tariff to help increase two-way trade between US and India in clean technologies and services. He suggested eliminating/ reducing tariffs is a step in the right direction to encourage technology transfer and that MOEF encourage India's Commerce Ministry to move in this direction. The Chairman stated that he looked forward to a more focused engagement with India. Both Connaughton and Meena agreed that the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP)

needs to be accelerated and scaled up.

Forestation Plans

¶5. Referencing the Bali discussions on meaningful action to reduce emissions through forestation, Minister Meena mentioned that 23 percent of the land mass is forested out of which 4 to 5 percent has been declared as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

Elaborating on India's afforestation plans, Minister Meena mentioned that six million hectares will be re-forested in the coming years and private land owners will be encouraged to take up agro-forestry activities.

¶6. This cable was cleared by Landon Van Dyke of CEO.

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